



New Charts Won't Leave You Grounded

How old is your chart? How old was it when you bought it? Although your chart may be new, check the date on the bottom left border; it may show that your chart was actually printed 1, 2 or even 3 years ago and has been in storage since then.

Tres Palacios (TX) Provisional Squadron was fortunate to be able to test two new Print-on-Demand (POD) nautical charts. The charts are not even printed until the retailer buys them, and when they are printed, every Notice to Mariners correction from the latest digitally updated National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) files is on the chart. You pay about \$20, and the salesclerk slides a chart across the counter that's as current as the day it was printed, which was only a few days ago.

I don't keep my Notice to Mariners corrections up-to-date, so now I can purchase the latest chart available and walk out of the store knowing that my vessel has the most current chart available. Soon, charts will be printed while you wait. (Reckon we can get a drive-through window?)

Not only is the material more current, the charts now come in two upgraded versions: a double-sided laminated chart that is drown-

proof and WR35, which is printed on water-resistant paper. I think the WR35 version is easier to write on, easier to fold and definitely more water-resistant than my old-style paper charts. We were told that the double-sided laminate chart is the default POD chart that will be printed when you ask for the POD version. If you want WR35 charts, you must make sure the dealer knows this before he prints your order. Both types are great. It's just my personal preference.

Richard Sillcox, NOAA project manager for Print-on-Demand charts, told us that the old-style charts will still be available for those who don't want to spend the extra money or who need a chart immediately.

"In general, any new edition will be available in Print-on-Demand 5 to 8 weeks before that new edition is on the street as the traditional lithographic NOAA chart. The POD chart is up-to-date anytime you buy it," Sillcox said.

So, now when you find yourself in trouble, what will be your reason for running aground? It can't be because you didn't have an up-to-date chart available.

To see where you can order these new charts, go to <http://chartmaker.noaa.gov/POD/>, and click on the "List Of Retailers" link, which takes you to the OceanGrafix Web site (<http://oceangrafix.com/agents.html>). To check the production schedule status of the POD chart for your area, log on to <http://chartmaker.noaa.gov/POD/update.htm>.

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Nautical chart images
from USPS Piloting course manual.